



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,  
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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## THE FÉSOLE CLUB PAPERS.

BY W. G. COLLINGWOOD.

### XVII. ATTITUDE.

ONE of the difficulties in arranging the studies in our Club is, that sketching from Nature means out-door work as much as possible, and *that* depends upon the weather; and the Clerk of the weather-office has never applied for the Rules of the Club, and does not seem to be aware of its existence. In former years, sad things happened. Out-of-door studies were made impossible in some months; and in other months, when indoor subjects were set, it was temptingly fine. "Really, I am ashamed of the weather," as the Lake-district innkeeper said after a week of wet; but we must try again, and every month when an out-door subject is set, use the first fine day to attempt it. Members should get their booksellers to let them have the *Review* immediately on publication, and be ready, before the first week of the month is over, to make, at any rate, a preliminary sketch, which will be something to show even if it cannot be followed up with completer studies.

But as May is proverbially uncertain, and as this past March has borrowed at least half of its fine days, let us try one more indoor subject, before venturing abroad in quest of open-air figures.

The drawings of "Niobe" have shown that our members found no great difficulty in sketching a quiet model, in spite of some apprehensions. A very good drawing-master used to say, "You can learn to draw anything, if you will give your mind to it;" by which he meant, "Attack each difficulty separately, and resolutely." And with the first practice of March, and the careful measurements of April, we should now have confidence enough to try a new difficulty.

This difficulty is Attitude; and to those who have never faced it, a terrible one. You see now and then street-scenes, by artists who can paint the houses beautifully, who *could*, if they gave their minds to it, paint the people too; but

for want of special study of attitude, their figures are so many sticks, pegged into the pavements. It is useless to tell an artist that he should have taken more care over any one picture. He has usually to work at speed, and to dot in his figures without elaborate preparation. But if he has already studied attitude, the result of his study will show itself, in the almost unconscious arrangement of every blot and line. It is not by making an effort that one does good things; it is by having made efforts, until the difficulty has vanished.

Among the old masters of water-colour, Prout was perhaps the cleverest at what they called "inserting figures." The people in his streets, though lightly drawn, and slenderly coloured, seem to move in picturesque groups, to circulate in the market-places, to congregate at the church doors, full of life and variety, hardly ever depending, as Turner's figures do, on incident and symbolical meaning, still less on palpable artifices and theatrical arrangement, but managed with perfect freedom and harmonious ease. Perhaps it was a "gift" of Prout's; but the multitudinous sketches of attitude in his "Microcosm" show how he earned the gift.

"Attitude is everything," says an old proverb. In figure-drawing it is much, if not all; but let it be "everything" in the study for this month. Let the drawings be as rough as they must, get the attitude. Let them be pencil scribbles, or penned and coloured, but get the attitude. Let legs and arms be in any proportion or disproportion (after last month's work, they should be pretty correct without much attention—the having made efforts will tell), let heads be like turnips, and eyes and noses wanting, but get the attitude. A fresh mind, for this cannot be done without undivided attention,—a fresh mind and a soft pencil will do the work. Throw the colour over your lines freely, before your model tires, and let well alone, without trying to work up the sketch into a picture.

A variety of attitudes may be tried, of which a few are suggested; the choice will depend upon the available model.

1. Reading. Note the inclination of the head, and the firm resting of the elbows on the arms of the chair. Let the model have time to become interested in the book, before you try the attitude; for which purpose spend twenty minutes in drawing the chair first.



2. Writing. Put the model at a small table on the other side of the room, so that you can see the lower part of the figure; get the head nearly in profile, to give the stoop of the back.

3. Sketching,—a useful pose for a landscape figure, and one which will be conveniently arranged where two members are working together.

4. Carrying a large basket (it need not be heavy) with both hands; the body leaning back a little to keep the balance.

5. Carrying the basket on the head, with one or both arms up.

6. Carrying the baby, if the models can be got, is always a good incident to have in stock.

7. Picking flowers, or what not, from the ground; one hand holding up the apron to receive the flowers (or what not), one foot a little advanced, and the balance of the figure properly kept.

8. Lying down—one of the most natural attitudes in a summer landscape, but not the easiest to draw.

All these—and they are only specimens—illustrate quiet attitudes, not depending upon quick movement. We will study Action later on; but the expression of simplicity and serenity is our present aim, the gesture of continuous uneventful employment or of absolute repose, distinct alike from violent action and rigid lifelessness.

For the Junior Class, a small flower, such as a daisy or a primrose, as it grows, not cut and put in water. The plant can be dug out, and potted, or simply laid, with its native earth, on a saucer, which saucer or pot need not be drawn. Place the plant ten or twelve feet away from you, on a level with the eye; and arrange a white card or stiff paper about a foot behind, to serve as background. Outline with pencil; fix the contours of the main masses with fine pen line; colour each mass separately with one tint, matched beforehand by trying it on the edge of a slip of paper held between your eye and the object. The lights in the masses of colour can be taken out with a nearly dry brush before the tint dries, and darks can be added afterwards. In this study, great care must be taken to get the spring of the stalk and the foreshortening of the petals and leaves. As in the figure studies of the Senior Class, this month Attitude is to be everything.

## A CALENDAR.

### MAY

1st. St. Philip and St. James. Collect, Epistle and Gospel. See printed hymn.

2nd.

3rd.

4th. Livingstone died 1873. Read extract from his "Travels."

"I would earnestly recommend all young missionaries to go at once to the real heathen, and never to be content with what has been made ready to their hands by men of greater enterprise. The idea of making model Christians of the young need not be entertained by anyone who is secretly convinced, as most men who know their own hearts are, that he is not a model Christian himself. The Israelitish slaves brought out of Egypt by Moses were not converted and elevated in one generation, though under the direct teaching of God himself. Notwithstanding the numbers of miracles He wrought, a generation had to be cut off because of unbelief. Our own elevation also has been the work of centuries, and, remembering this, we should not indulge in overwrought expectations as to the elevation, which those who have inherited the degradation of ages, may attain in our day." Page 116.

5th.—8th.

9th. Schiller died 1805. Read passage from Wallenstein, Coleridge's Translation.

"My son, the nursling of the camp spoke in thee!

A war of fifteen years

Hath been thy education and thy school.

Peace hast thou never witness'd! There exists

A higher than the warrior's excellence.

In war itself war is no ultimate purpose.

The vast and sudden deeds of violence,

Adventures wild and wonders of the moment,

These are not they, my son, that generate

The Calm, the Blissful, and th' enduring Mighty!

Lo there! the soldier, rapid architect!

Builds his light town of canvass, and at once

The whole scene moves and bristles momentarily

With arms, and neighing steeds, and mirth and quarrel!

The motley market fills! the roads, the streams

Are crowded with new freights; trade stirs and hurries!